

28 August 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ✓

Subject: The Navarre Concept for Operations
in Indochina.

1. In a memorandum for you, dated 21 April 1953, subject: "Proposed French Strategic Plan for the Successful Conclusion of the War in Indochina," the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out certain weaknesses in the LeTourneau-Allard plan, but felt that it was workable. During the visit of the U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina, Lieutenant General Navarre submitted in writing to Lieutenant General O'Daniel, Chief of the Mission, a paper entitled "Principles for the Conduct of the War in Indochina" appended hereto, which appears to correct these weaknesses and which presents a marked improvement in French military thinking concerning operations in Indochina.

2. In his report Lieutenant General O'Daniel stated that, in his opinion, the new French command in Indochina will accomplish under the Navarre concept the decisive defeat of the Viet Minh by 1955 and that the addition of two or more French divisions from outside of Indochina would expedite this defeat. Additions other than in divisional organization would be in error since it is the divisional team, with its combat proven effectiveness, which is sorely needed in Indochina. Lieutenant General O'Daniel further reported that French military leaders were most cooperative with the mission, that several agreements were accomplished to improve the effectiveness of the proposed military operations, and that repeated invitations were extended to the U.S. mission to return in a few months to witness the progress the French will have made.

3. Based on past performances by the French, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have reservations in predicting actual results which can be expected pending additional proof by demonstration of continued French support and by further French performance in Indochina. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that a basic requirement for military success in Indochina is one of creating a political climate in that country which will provide the incentive for natives to support the French and supply

them with adequate intelligence which is vital to the successful conduct of operations in Indochina. If this is accomplished and if the Navarre concept is vigorously pursued militarily in Indochina and given wholehearted political support in France, it does offer a promise of military success sufficient to warrant appropriate additional U.S. aid required to assist. U.S. support of the Navarre concept should be based on needs of the French Union Forces in Indochina for additional equipment necessary to implement the organization of the "Battle Corps" envisaged by the Navarre concept and necessary support of the planned expansion of indigenous forces, such needs to be screened by the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Indochina. In addition, to improve the chances of success, this support should include continued close liaison and coordination with French military authorities together with friendly but firm encouragement and advice where indicated.

4. In furtherance of the O'Daniel Mission the Joint Chiefs of Staff are receiving Progress Reports from Indochina. Information received from Indochina indicates the French are not pursuing agreements reached between General O'Daniel and General Navarre (including the Navarre Concept) as vigorously as expected by General O'Daniel and as contemplated by him in his report. Progress reports state that (a) the French have "no plans for a general fall offensive beyond limited objective operations designed to keep the enemy off balance", (b) reorganization into regiments and division-size units "is still in the planning stages", (c) there is "no sense of urgency in the training of senior Vietnamese commanders and staff officers", (d) the organization of a training command is awaiting the solution of "political problems" and (e) the "organization of the amphibious plan has not gone beyond the planning stages".

5. In light of the apparent slowness of the French in following up the Navarre Concept and other agreements reached between General Navarre and General O'Daniel, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that additional U.S. support should be conditioned upon continued implementation of French support, demonstration of French intent by actual performance in Indochina, and continued French willingness to receive and act upon U.S. military advice. Further, the French should be urged at all levels to support and vigorously prosecute the Navarre concept to the maximum extent of their capabilities.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

SIGNED

ARTHUR RADFORD,
Chairman,
Joint Chiefs of Staff.